

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### GILBERT KEY NAMED TO FILL NEW POSITION OF WETLAND COORDINATOR

As part of an effort to place greater emphasis on preservation of the Nation's wetlands, the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has established a new position of wetland coordinator to provide information on and guidance to wetland programs. Director Lynn A. Greenwalt has named Gilbert "Gil" Key, a Fish and Wildlife Service career employee, to fill the position.

"Many different offices of the Fish and Wildlife Service conduct activities that relate to preserving wetlands," Greenwalt said in announcing Key's appointment. "The wetland coordinator position will provide a single source of information about wetlands for private citizens, organizations, and State and Federal agencies. This will facilitate the exchange of data about wetlands and will help us identify steps we can take to improve protection of wetlands."

Following the announcement, Robert Herbst, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, expressed concern about the continuing destruction of the Nation's wetlands. "From 200 to 300 thousand acres of wetlands are being destroyed in the United States every year," Herbst said. "This destruction poses a serious threat not only to wildlife and fisheries but to important human needs such as maintaining good water quality and adequate stream flows and groundwater supplies. I am convinced that this problem is aggravated by insufficient public understanding of the real

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values of wetlands, coupled with the fact that wetlands seldom return any hard cash to their owners. In many cases, the ownership is private. The values are public."

Herbst added that the President's emphasis on wise use of water resources has further underscored the need to protect wetlands.

Wetlands serve as nursery areas for fish and shellfish, breeding and wintering grounds for waterfowl, and provide food and cover for deer, furbearers, songbirds, and other wildlife. In addition, potholes, swamps, marshes, and other wetlands trap rainwater and melting snow, allowing water to sink into the ground to become part of the water table. This is especially important in water-starved areas of the United States where groundwater and stream flows are being rapidly depleted by pumping and irrigation. By catching water and slowing its runoff, wetlands also help prevent soil erosion and floods in streams and rivers downstream.

As wetland coordinator, Key will provide information and recommendations on Interior Department wetland programs, including such activities as wetlands acquisition and inventories and measures to prevent and mitigate damage to wetlands caused by Federal actions. Key will also help identify new initiatives and research needed for improved wetland protection. The new position does not replace any existing FWS wetland functions or responsibilities.

Key, 44, has had broad experience in wetland programs in his 12 years with the Service. Formerly a senior biologist with the FWS Division of Ecological Services, he has also worked as area supervisor of Ecological Services in Pierre, South Dakota; as an environmental specialist with the Division of Wildlife Refuges in Twin Cities, Minnesota; and as wetlands biologist in North Dakota and Minnesota in the Small Wetlands Acquisition Program.

Key can be contacted at the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (PD-HP), Washington, D.C. 20240, or phone (202) 343-4034.